

**SB 136 – Family friendly hunting** (Sen. Joe Balyeat)

Handout – A Beautiful Sunset

We want to make it economically feasible for MT families who, because of job considerations, have been forced to spread out geographically beyond state borders, to be able to come home to MT and hunt together, to carry on the tradition. Many of our children have been forced to leave the state to find jobs, and we'd like to provide a way for our native sons and daughters to come back home and continue sharing the hunting and fishing experience they grew up with.

The original bill was way too broad, and had some opposition early on. So you'll see in the bill before you that we amended it in Senate F&G --- we completely struck the original proposal, and the amended proposal now has most of the main opponents as proponents of the bill. Our revised bill (see page 7) took existing law which was originally sponsored by former Rep. George Golie, and we amended it to make it workable. Rep. Golie had a great idea similar to mine to allow native born Montanans to come home and hunt with their parents. But the previous legislature put so many restrictions in his bill that it really didn't work in practice. I think only 5 people used it one year, and 3 people the next. So I sat down with Mr. Golie and worked out some amendments to his statute to try to make it workable. We substituted a previous MT resident hunting & fishing license instead of a previous MT high school diploma (bottom of page 7), and we struck the age requirement. We also expanded it to not include just MT born children, but also include Mt born brothers/sisters, and parents. The amended statute retains Rep. Golie's price structure – which is basically each license will be available at twice the rate paid by residents.

Note from the fiscal note that the bill generates badly needed revenue for FWP.

It helps with the attrition problem. MT is losing hunters at an alarming rate.... I believe 7% per year.

The amended version you have before you is endorsed by MSSA, MT Wildlife Federation, and Headwaters F&G. I'm providing letters of support for you.

We also already have another statute trying to address this issue, but it didn't quite do the trick either. The other one – the "coming home to hunt" law – sets aside some licenses, but still keeps the price at non-resident rates... so hardly any of them got used. Now after the passage of I-161, the price is driven several hundred dollars higher yet – to almost \$1000, so the coming home to hunt legislation we passed is rendered almost useless, until we fix it with the concept expressed in this bill.

MT families, our native sons and daughters, that grew up together experiencing our tremendous hunting and fishing culture ought to be able to continue on with that tradition, and pass it on to future generations. SB 136 makes that financially possible, and creates revenue instead of costing us anything. What could be better? I urge a do pass.